The League of Lost Causes

By H. M. EGBERT — Being the Romantic Adventures of Paul Lane, American Millionaire

The Education of Edward

AND this, I suppose, will be the last meeting of the club," said his majesty, King George of England, rising with a yawn and buttoning up his gloves.

"The last regular meeting sir," answered Lord Claude Tresham, secretary to the organization. "The premises will always be open."

"But for more convivial purposes," put in ex-King Manuel of Portugal, laughing. "I regret to say that an immediate engagement——"

"Manuel," interrupted the English monarch, clapping the young fellow upon the shoulder, "we owe you much gratitude. By detaching yourself from this criminal league you have put an end to its activities in Europe. When the Tsar withdrew his support you were the last prop left. And now——"

"Well, I did think it could get me back my throne," said Manuel, yawning. 'And naturally I was not greatly averse to using it as a means toward that end. But now, if you will pardon me, a most important affair of state makes my presence imperative, and so——"

"It's curious," observed King George, lingering at the door, "it's up in a night and lost its influence in a day. When Professor Dvornak propounded his plan for the revival of aristocracy he had an immediate response from half the rulers of Europe. I confess that for a time he influenced me. I believe the league would have effected its purposes, too, had it not been used by base men for thir own purposes, and sunk to the level of an anarchistic organization, thus compelling us to form a counter league to thwart it. And that we have succeeded is due entirely to you, Tresham."

"And to Paul Lane," said Tresham.

"The American millionaire?"

"Yes, sir. He, too, was entrapped into joining the league and aiding it with his money, principally through the influence of her highness the Princess Clothilde of Austria. He came over to us when he learned the true nature of the society, and has since done all in his power to aid us. And I have hopes that the princess herself will join in giving the league the coup de grace."

"A very remarkable woman, the Princess Clothilde," said King George thoughtfully. "I know her well and hope to see her often now that she has abandoned Dvornak and his fellow conspirators. As for this Lane—where is he?"

"Not far from here, sir," answered Lord Claude.

"Well, you must bring him to see me next time we are both in Paris. Do you go my way, Manuel?" he continued, turning to the Portuguese sovereign.

"No, cousin. I have a most pressing appointment on weighty matters of state," replied the other, and vanished without further ceremony down the same stairs by which King George soon afterward took his departure.

It was in the private dining room of Monsieur Gabriel, in Paris. Seven kings had attended what was to be the last session of their club. Formed by the steadier heads among the European rulers, to combat the perilous activities of the league, it had accomplished its purpose. The league was on its last legs. And Paul Lane, who had opposed it with all his resources, had been mainly instrumental in securing its overthrow.

Lord Claude Tresham stepped back to the mantel and lit a cigarette.

"I wonder," he mused, as he puffed out a cloud of fragrant smoke, "I wonder just how soon King George will learn that his heir has been kidnapped!"

He strode across the room and pulled back the curtain which separated the dining room from that of the attendants.

"Paul!" he called, "come in."

Paul Lane, in waiter's garb, which was converted into conventional evening dress by the removal of the napkin protruding from his waistcoat, entered and took the cigarette which the other handed him.

"I wanted you to hear our conversation tonight, Paul," said Lord Tresham, "because I have good reason to believe that the activities of the league are not wholly ended. In fact, they have succeeded in pulling off a most daring coup. Prince Edward of Wales was kidnapped two hours ago."

"In Paris?"

"Yes, from the town house of the Marquis de Breteuil, whose guest he has been, as you know, for several months, in order that he might become proficient in French. King George and Queen Mary arrived in Paris this afternoon incognito, to see their son. They visited the marquis' house and met the prince, and, being satisfied that all is right with him, will not expect to see him again until tomorrow. Between now and then the prince must be found. I have just learned the news from one of our agents. Nobody knows it yet, not even the Marquis de Breteuil."

"But is there no clue? What was the purpose of the conspirators?"

"The purpose, Paul, is wholly unknown to me. There does exist a clue, however. The Princes Clothilde, who, as you know, has resolved to oppose the league, but fears to do so openly owing to some hold which Von Holzrath, their leader, has over her, wishes to see you at midnight in the Cafe Celestiel, on the Boulevard Richepin—a famous haunt of actors and soubrettes. She sent me this message half an hour before the club convened. It was something of an ordeal to keep all knowledge of this affair from King George, as you may well imagine. Now the best thing you can do will be to follow up this clue. I rely implicitly in you, Paul—only remember, Prince Edward must be found by daybreak and restored to the house of the marquis before his father and mother get wind of the affair."

Paul did not delay a moment, but, clapping on his hat and struggling into his overcoat, he hurried down the stairs of Gabriel's and took a taxicab to the corner of the Boulevard Richepin. Arrived there, he dismissed the vehicle and proceeded afoot toward the cafe, reaching it just as a clock pealed the hour of twelve in announcement to twenty other clocks, which solemnly took up the sound.

The Cafe Celestiel was brilliant with lights and gay with diners. Men in evening dress and women in magnificent gowns, set off with flashing jewels, moved restlessly among those seated, or, seated themselves, sipped their liquors and chattered incessantly, while over the buzz of conversation rang out the lively strains of music. Paul, standing at the entrance, let his eyes wander over the throng. He scanned each face, but he did not detect that of Clothilde.

He noticed, however, that, though apparently engrossed in their own affairs, each couple looked furtively toward one central focus, on which all eyes were more or less directed, while he could hear low exclamations of astonishment among those nearest him. Following these glances, Paul suddenly found himself staring at a lad of about seventeen or eighteen years who, seated beside a loudly dressed woman, evidently an actress, was indulging in hilarious laughter due quite as much to wine as to amusement. Paul looked harder and then gasped in astonishment. This was Prince Edward. There was no mistaking that trim coat, of English cut, those patent leather shoes, topped with the white spats, and the very cane with a dog's head, all of which had been familiarized to the Parisians through newspaper drawings and cartoons. And the woman was—Gabrielle de Soucy, the notorious actress whose indiscretions had formed the staple of Paris gossip ever since she entangled the ex-king of Portugal in her clutches and released him several thousand pounds the poorer.

"But it is indiscreet!" he heard a woman near him murmur to his companion. "To princes much is forgiven—but to parade himself thus, here!"

"Oh!" murmured the man, rolling up his eyebrows in affected horror. "If his royal mother knew—that Puritan lady of England! Mon Dieu! Doubtless she thinks he is asleep in his bed at this hour."

"The marquis, his guardian, must be stark, raving mad to allow this," exclaimed the woman again.

Paul's eye caught that of the prince. He detected a distinct message in it. He moved toward the young fellow, puzzled, wondering; something in that glance made him dimly aware that he had seen him in the flesh, knew him. . . .

It was the Princess Clothilde, masquerading in the prince's clothes!

The shock of the discovery stupefied Paul. Quite quietly he sat down into the chair which the princess indicated to him. He saw the looks of the diners fixed on him; he felt amazed, helpless, out of his depth. But the pseudo-prince was talking more hilariously than ever, and the actress, apparently believing Paul to be one of the prince's friends, had already transfixed him with her languishing glances.

"No, no," hiccoughed the prince, catching the glance. "No, he is not for you, my dear Gabrielle. This is a particular friend of mine, with whom I have an important engagement. You will pardon me if I leave you for one moment?"

"O, certainly," murmured Gabrielle, not in the most friendly tone. Evidently she suspected Paul of being an agent of the marquis, he thought.

Then, slipping out of the chair, Clothilde plucked Paul by the arm and motioned to him to follow into a dimly lighted corner, a little apart from the crowd. She sat down at a small table and Paul took his seat at her side.

"Clothilde, what folly is this?" he began harshly. "To masquerade in public while——"

"Hush, Paul!" she answered, and suddenly he perceived that there was a depth of passionate emotion under the feigned merriment. "Paul, when I told you that I was resolved to leave the league, I told you also that I must first work out my destiny, until I had crushed the league or till it had crushed me. Von Holzrath knows that I am no longer an enthusiast in his cause. He offered me the choice between furthering his schemes and—ruin. I pretended to obey him; secretly I sent a message to Lord Tresham, making an appointment for you to meet me here, for I had heard you were in Paris. Now listen, Paul:

"They mean no harm to the prince. They want to set France and England by the ears—and what easier than to make England think that the young prince, who is a model of decorum, has fallen into evil ways and that the Marquis de Breteuil has been unfaithful to his trust? They know that King George and Queen Mary arrived incognito in Paris this afternoon to see their son. So they have kidnapped him for a few hours, meaning that I shall play his part with Gabrielle de Soucy in public. Tomorrow, when the prince is released, his story of kidnapping will be scouted; the king will take him back to England immediately, and public opinion in England will be aflame against France.

"I dared not refuse Von Holzrath, but I sent a message secretly, as you know."

"But where is the prince?" cried Paul.

"I do not know. I could not learn. Paul, for heaven's sake follow on his track, for I must go back and play my part again. Von Holzrath is ubiquitous, his spies may even now be watching me. It is madness to be seen talking with you."

"One moment. Gabrielle thinks you the prince? It is incredible that a woman should be deceived."

"No, Paul. She is but playing her part. She knows nothing of the plot and thinks the whole thing a wager, wherefrom she is to reap ten thousand francs for aiding in the jest. Now I must go." She rose.

"But the prince," Paul cried again in desperation. "Give me some clue."

"I cannot, Paul. Ask at the house of the marquis. That is all I can suggest. I must go, Paul—forgive me."

For a fraction of a moment he felt her hand in his, and then he knew that, whatever the part which she must play, her love was his. Some day, when all their sufferings were ended, he would take her home with him, to dwell in peace and quiet for all their lives in his own land. Home! The thought, the memory of it burned in his heart and gave him new resolution. He buttoned his coat tightly and hurried away from the restaurant toward the marquis' town house.

But it was five miles from the Cafe Celestiel to that fashionable neighborhood where the Marquis de Breteuil resided, and Paul, when about to hail a taxicab, discovered to his consternation that he had no money in his pocket. He knew no one from whom to borrow in that region. It was almost as far to Lord Claude's abode as to that of the marquis. There was nothing to do but to walk. So he strode through the endless streets, crossed the Seine, and then proceeded through a mean region of little shops, while from time to time the pealing of the city clocks indicated the swift passage of the hours. It was nearly two before he stood at last in front of the old chateau in which the prince was harbored.

He knew his room! It had been indicated in many a diagram and plan in many a newspaper. It overlooked the avenue, and now Paul, standing directly under it, perceived that there was a light in the prince's window. And, as he looked up, straining his eyes to catch a clearer glimpse of the figure behind the curtain, suddenly the window was thrown wide open and the youthful figure of the prince looked out.

It was Prince Edward! There was no mistaking him! None could have mistaken that characteristic figure, that bright, English face, the profile—it was the prince complete, even down to the fashionable coat so often portrayed.

As Paul watched the prince turned round, the curtain fell, and the light went out.

He had come on a wild goose chase, and the true explanation of it suddenly flashed through his mind. Von Holzrath, the soul and cunning inspiration of the league, distrusting Clothilde, had merely pretended that the prince had been kidnapped, in order that she might reveal the story and spread the rumor, they incidentally throwing his enemies off their guard. Paul had not credited the man with so much originality. In the midst of these rumors, which would doubtless be communicated to King George, who would believe the prince's own story that he had spent the night quietly at home, when the newspapers would be full of his night adventure in the Cafe Celestiel? Truly Von Holzrath had hit upon a cunning scheme, and one which far transcended the vulgar vice of kidnapping the heir apparent.

Paul's resolution was made up in an instant. He must hurry back to the Cafe Celestiel, acquaint Clothilde with the truth about the affair, and force her, by any means in his power, to accompany him to Lord Claude's house and there reveal the details of the conspiracy.

The Cafe Celestiel was still brilliant with lights, and the band still played, but the cafe itself was almost empty. A few newcomers lazily sipped their absinthe there—shabby folks, night birds, journalists and writers who kept irregular hours. They were gathered in little groups and noisily discussing some topic of interest. Paul, seating himself close by, made out the tenor of the conversation with no difficulty.

"I wish I had been there!" moaned a shaggy-haired newspaper writer. "Just my luck to miss such an event! Tell me, Alphonse, just what occurred."

"He was here at midnight with her—Mademoiselle de Soucy," he said. "Sapristi! they drank together for two hours, Mademoiselle and the prince, till both were tipsy. And he flaunted himself so daringly, Messieurs, in his English coat and his patent leathers, yes, even to the dog's-head cane that all Paris has learned to know. He won all hearts, this English prince. And then, just as we were wondering whether or not he would roll under the table, up steps—who do you think? Manuel of Portugal!"

"Ciel! What a meeting! And hten?"

"When Mademoiselle perceived him she grew pale as death and rose from the table with a little cry of fear, and stood facing the ex-king with arms stretched out as though to shield the boy prince from his wrath. And the prince rose, too, and looked upon Manuel with calm dignity—the dignity of a prince, an English prince. Messieurs. And then Manuel walked up to the prince and, taking off his gloves in a leisurely way, folded them together and struck Prince Edward across the face. And then men sprang between them and—and——"

"A duel!" exclaimed the shaggy-haired journalist. "Mon Dieu! Where will it be?"

"None knows. They went off with their seconds in two taxicabs, leaving poor Mademoiselle de Sodcy alone and half hysterical. But it is certain that they will fight before morning."

Paul sprang to his feet in horror. A duel! Clothilde, in a boy's garb, engaged in a fencing bout with the infuriated young man who had been ruler of Portugal!

He made his way drunkenly toward the corner in which he and Clothilde had sat. A scrap of paper was lying upon one of the chairs. Paul opened it mechanically and saw a scrap of writing upon it. He read:

"The little park in the Bois at five."

The blood tingled in his veins. Clothilde, in the supreme moment of the challenge, had, then, found time somehow to indite that note to him, knowing that he would come back, and trusting that he would discover it. Paul knew the little park—an unfrequented glade, one of the score and more in which duelists met to settle their differences.

It was a quarter before four. He had no time to go to Lord Tresham's house. He must decide immediately. If he set out at once he could reach the dueling ground some fifteen minutes before the appointed time.

The pale light of the summer morning had already begun to make the trees and paths distinguishable when Paul arrived at the gate of the Bois nearest to the dueling ground. It was twenty minutes to five. He quickened his steps, directing them toward the little glade. At last he reached it—thank God, it was empty—and, flinging himself down upon the dewy grass, he rested. His limbs ached and his head was swimming; his eyes were heavy from want of sleep. He needed all his strength to control himself. He must act wisely, swiftly and say not one rash word.

Presently a fiacre rattled up and halted in the middle of the near-by carriage drive, and two men stepped out of it. Almost immediately it was followed by another, which, halting in the identical spot, disgorged three others. Through the bushes behind which he lay concealed Paul could see, in the rapidly increasing light, that the first two men were Manuel and his second; the other three were the supposed prince, his second, and a man who carried a little black case and was evidently a doctor.

The parties saluted formally, and the man with the case stepped forward and communed for a while with Manuel's second. Then, being joined by their parties, they stationed them in chosen places, some fifteen paces apart. And, as the man with the case opened it, Paul perceived to his horror that the case did not contain surgical supplies.

It contained two pistols. This was evidently to be a duel a l'outrance. And one of the combatants would fall, killed, or perhaps mortally wounded.

That the duel was to be a serious one was evinced from the fact that the combatants were set facing each other, and not back to back, as is commonly done in encounters when only honor is sought. The principals raised their pistols; the seconds took their stations. The man with the case, half between the two, raised a white handkerchief.

"One!" he counted.

Suddenly Paul saw a third carriage, driven at a furious pace, dash down the drive and come to a halt fifty yards away. A middle-aged gentleman and a lady, primly dressed, descended, and, perceiving what was taking place, began running wildly toward the combatants.

"Two!" shouted the man in the middle.

Paul bounded from the underbrush. "Put up your weapons!" he yelled in French. And the five, startled by this sudden appearance and still more unceremonious command, obeyed.

"Monsieur!" exclaimed the man with the handkerchief, as Paul stumbled toward him, "this is most unseemly. If you——"

"Well done! Well done!" shouted the middle-aged man, finding his voice as he staggered into the middle of the group, leaving the lady toiling in the rear. 'Just in the nick of time. Edward!"

But if the others were disconcerted the middle-aged man was more discomfited than they. He seemed to totter backward; his eyes stared through their heavy fringes, and his mouth opened and remained open. The lady, who joined the group at that moment, seemed paralyzed with fear. She sank to the ground, sobbing. The gentleman raised her in his arms and, turning upon the group with an expression of sternness, said:

"That man is not my son."

Round the bend of the drive came a fourth carriage, and before it stopped a young man leaped from it and came bounding, lithe as a deer, across the grass, shouting as he advanced. He burst into the midst of the assembled company and clasped his mother in his arms. And the rest, entirely overcome by the crescendo of these unparalleled circumstances, only looked wildly at one another. They could not find their tongues.

It was really astonishing how little they resembled each other—the true prince and the false. If clothes make the man, they had certainly made the prince in the minds of the Parisians. For, save that each wore a trim English coat and patent leather boots and spats, and carried a cane with a dog's head, there was astonishingly little resemblance between the true Prince Edward, with his arms round his sobbing mother, and the false Prince Edward, still holding the dueling pistol.

"I heard that you had come here to look for me, father," exclaimed the prince. "What does it mean? They sent a telephone mesage to the marquis' house——"

"Who sent it?"

"The 'Daily Star.' They told the marquis that I had been out all night in a cafe, that I was to fight a duel, that you had come to Paris and had been warned to be in the Bois, and so I—what does it mean?"

Queen Mary picked herself up and came forward, her eyes boring like steel augers into Clothilde's face.

"Who is that woman, masquerading as my son, the prince?" she asked.

Then, rising to the occasion, Paul stepped forward, doffing his hat with his politest smile.

"It means, Madam," he said, "that a cinematograph picture was to be taken in the Bois, and that one of the chief actors unfortunately adopted a dress too similar to your son's."

"Ha!" snorted King George incredulously. "Where is your camera, sir?"

"I left it in the cab," replied Paul deferentially. "The cabman took it in charge because I had forgotten my money."

LETTER SOAKED IN COCAINE

Denver Prison Officials Find the Baneful Drug in Missive to Inmate.

The core of an apple, the peel of a banana and the stone of a peach have been used as a means of smuggling cocaine into the county jail, but attaches believe that an entirely new plan has been evolved, says a Denver dispatch.

A letter was received yesterday addressed to one of the inmates of the "dope" ward. No signs of cocaine could be detected in the corners of the envelope, but the jail officials decided to examine the letter more closely.

A minute scrutiny of the paper on which the letter was written revealed that it was saturated with the drug. There was enough in the sheet to supply one of the victims a week at least. The letter might have escaped detection if it had not been for the fact that the sender had overdone his work. A white powdery substance which covered the entire letter first aroused suspicion.

According to the jail attaches the paper had been boiled in water in which there was cocaine. After the water had boiled away the cocaine was observed by the paper, which was then rolled and dried. The sender of the letter has not been found. He signed no name.

The whisper of a beautiful woman can be heard farther than the loudest call of duty.—Anonymous.

NEW IDEA NOT IMPRESSIVE

Cabman Tried It, and It Worked, but He Still Prefers the Old Way.

"I was in a county court the other day," said the seedy-looking cabman, "and I heard one of those solicitor chaps say, 'People don't seem to understand that the only thing necessary to keep a horse from kicking when he is down is to get hold of his ear and keep his nose up in the air. A horse cannot kick when his nose is in the air. I have seen a lady keep a horse quiet that way without soiling her gloves.' 'What's good enough for a lady,' says I, 'is good enough for me,' and I tried it experimental-like, instead of sittin' on his 'ead.'

"Well," remarked the attentive listener, "did the horse kick?"

"Not a bit! He seemed so tickled with the idea that he couldn't stir for laffin'! But I think I shall sit on his 'ead next time, all the same."—London Answers.

Scythe Was a Fixture.

Three years ago last summer old Bill Shiftless got an industrious streak on and concluded he would cut some weeds in his back yard. He went to a neighbor's house and borrowed a scythe. When Bill got it back home he was all fagged out and hung the scythe over the limb of a peach tree and told his wife he would wait until morning to mow the weeds. I passed by Bill's house yesterday and the scythe was still hanging over the same limb.—Kansas City Star.

HOME TOWN HELPS

CHANGE WROUGHT BY GARDEN

Experiment by Mine Official Demonstrates How Much Good There Is in Beautiful Surroundings.

Grace Tabor, one of the department editors of the House and Garden, says that there is an intimate connection between a man and his garden. She was describing the early gardens of this country, those of the Spanish settlers in Florida, the Puritans in New England, the Dutch in New Amsterdam and the cavaliers and Quakers in Maryland and Pennsylvania. But no matter what the nationality or the style involved, a true garden reflects the character of its maker. She spoke truly, as any visitor to the formal terraces of Mount Vernon or to the democratic ledges of Monticello will agree. But if a garden reflects its maker's temperament, it is no less true that often a garden influences it.

In one of the American trade publications there recently appeared a story told by the general manager of a coal mining corporation at Weyanoke, W. Va.—a settlement in the district sorely afflicted with industrial conflicts. He saw that the average man worked short hours and rarely put in full time every month. This idleness was not voluntary, but came about in the regular course of the work. Idleness added to the discontent, so he hit on the idea of introducing into the mountain region the small garden system so profitably practiced by the laborers of England. He tried to induce his men to utilize their spare time in cultivating gardens, and offered prizes for various kinds of vegetables and flower plots.

At first the miners viewed the proposal with suspicion. One or two won the prizes. The next year the change was remarkable. Out of 225 men employed at the camp all the heads of families had started gardens. And splendid specimens they were, full of luscious small fruits and crisp, fresh vegetables. The women brightened their lives by sowing flower seeds. No matter how garish the color—it was color, and color brightened their hard lives.—Indianapolis News.

MUST LOOK TO THE FUTURE

New Law in Massachusetts Makes the Proper Planning of All Towns Compulsory.

The last legislature of Massachusetts, by two brief acts, made city planning compulsory for every town of more than 10,000 population and for every city. A large measure of home rule is provided by the law, since the local governing bodies—city councils, commissions or town meetings—will determine the number of members in each board, the rate of payment for services and expenses and other administrative details. State-wide unity will be given to the work by the supervision of the Massachusetts homestead commission.

Under the law the first task given the local boards is to make a comprehensive study of the resources, possibilities and needs of the community. This provision means that in the course of a comparatively brief time each city and town affected by the law will make an adequate social survey.

City planning under the Massachusetts law is a very human thing. First emphasis is laid upon the ordering of the municipal activities, both public and private, so that the health and welfare of the individual will be conserved. All city planning, of course, has this human end for its ultimate aim. The Massachusetts law makes this human end not only ultimate but immediate.

Hanging Garden in Minneapolis.

The work of the committee on hanging gardens of the Minenapolis Civic and Commerce association has been in evidence throughout the summer. As a result of the activity of this committee more than 1,500 feet of window boxes were installed by downtown business houses, and 105 of the ornamental lamp poses were decorated with vines and flowers, says Town Development.

The association attended to the watering of the lamp-post boxes, and the renewal of faded and dead plants.

Frequent comment upon this custom has come from summer visitors, and a large number of inquiries have been received from cities throughout the country with a view to the adoption of a similar plan in those cities. And, by the way, by the end of the present year Minneapolis will have had 120 conventions.

Beautifying of Cities.

We have built our cities and in them we must live. A country population we have turned and are still turning into a city population. Our soil tillers we have industrialized, taking them from surroundings where health and prosperity were largely a matter of individual gumption into surroundings where the assumption may be warranted perhaps, but where it certainly does not work. The cities are the battle ground of modern civilization. We must learn the strategy of this new social warfare of peace. One name for one part of it is city-planning.

Ready With Retort.

Candid Hostess (on seeing her nephew's fiancee for the first time)—"I never should have known you from your photograph. Beggie told me you were so pretty." Beggie's Fiancee—"No, I'm not pretty, so I have to try and be nice, and it's such a bore. Have you ever tried?"—Punch.

Word to Husbands.

The man who praises his wife cheapens her, and he who criticises her cheapens himself.—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.